



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 2 January 1968



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DAILY BRIEF
2 JANUARY 1968

1. North Vietnam

Speaking at a reception on Saturday, Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh said Hanoi "will" talk with the US if the bombing and "all other acts of war" against North Vietnam are ended "unconditionally." North Vietnamese spokesmen in the past have said only that there "could be talks" once Hanoi's conditions are met. Trinh's statement has been broadcast in English by Hanoi.

On the same day Trinh spoke, the North Vietnamese consul in New Delhi said categorically that an end to the bombing "would" lead to negotiations.

In neither instance did the North Vietnamese hint that Hanoi would curtail its own military activity or be prepared to talk about anything other than US - North Vietnamese relations. The apparent modification in North Vietnam's position may stem from the belief that Hanoi can increase international pressure for an end to the air attacks if it seems less rigid.

2. Cambodia

Sihanouk appears to have confirmed his Washington Post interview. At a press conference Sunday night, the Prince said again that he would receive an envoy from President Johnson "not to negotiate, but to palaver." He also said he "could not fight" US troops entering Cambodia if they were not detected. He insisted, however, that hot pursuit operations in populated areas would be met with force.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

Special Daily Report on North Vietnam



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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Trucks Move During Truce: Sunday night, US reconnaissance pilots described traffic south of Vinh as "bumper-to-bumper." An estimated 300-500 trucks were noted headed south.

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Haiphong Security: A Polish merchant marine officer reports even ships from Communist nations are searched by the North Vietnamese on entering Haiphong. Describing the procedure, the officer said North Vietnamese soldiers board the inbound vessel and collect all field glasses, radios, tape recorders, and cameras. These are then locked in one cabin with a Vietnamese soldier standing guard. Even officers' personal lockers are searched.

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West Germans Aid Hanoi: A West German news agency has announced that a complete field hospital for the treatment of bombing casualties was shipped recently to North Vietnam. The hospital, equipped with 60 beds and assorted technical facilities, represents the joint action of many private donors who pooled their contributions to the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva. The US Embassy in Bonn was told by the Federal Government that it had no official knowledge of the matter, but that it would not interfere.

Medical facilities of all types have long been accepted from the Free World by the North Vietnamese. This is one of the few areas in which Hanoi has consented to deal with the West, and to actively seek assistance. North Vietnamese officials in the past year have visited France, Scandinavia, and several other European countries seeking medical assistance.

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Party cadre were described as being firmly convinced that the North Vietnamese authorities are serious about fighting to the end and feelings of doubt about the wisdom of such action among the people are not voiced because of fear.

Draft -

There is considerable suspicion of the three-year draft as it is well known that presently one is released from service only for a physical disability. The minimum draft age is 18, but younger volunteers are accepted and boys in the 14-16 age bracket receive some rudimentary military training. Several Spaniards reported isolated cases of draft dodging or efforts to feign illness. The consensus was, however, that it was most difficult, if not impossible, to avoid the draft.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

Hanoi on the Post-Dispatch: Hanoi, in an English language broadcast on 31 December, reported and discussed a recent editorial in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. As seen in Hanoi, the editorial was "strongly against the Johnson administration's plea for its Vietnam policy." The broadcast quoted the editorial as "laying waste point by point a statement by Assistant Secretary Bundy." The paper reportedly claimed that Saigon is being defeated by "South Vietnamese revolutionaries" and that South Vietnam was never a sovereign state "except by American fiat."

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